

THE
BENEFITS OF CHRISTIANITY
CONTRASTED
WITH THE
PERNICIOUS INFLUENCE
OF
MODERN PHILOSOPHY
UPON
CIVIL SOCIETY
BEING
A SERMON,
ON A DAY OF
THANKSGIVING
FOR THE
PROVIDENTIAL ESCAPE
OF
HIS MAJESTY
FROM THE LATE ATROCIOUS OUTRAGE
UPON
HIS SACRED PERSON.

Preached at QUEBEC CHAPEL,
PORTMAN-SQUARE.

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L O N D O N:

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TO THE READER.

THE consequences of Irreligion upon those great principles, which form the basis of Public Security, are such as demand the most full and profound investigation. In obedience, however, to the solicitude of some requests, and because I feel that at this particular period* compliance becomes a duty, I submit the following thoughts to the Public. At a future moment, I hope to lay before them a more extensive view of the Subject: this is but a Declaration of Hostilities against the libertinism of mock Philosophy. The charms of Vice, the seduction of Example, and the subtlety of Scepticism arrayed in all the energy and embellishments of Style, are the combined Supporters of Irreligion, which I see rise menacingly before me. But on what ground do they establish it? On the total overthrow of Reason; for it is more than

Folly

* Another most daring Outrage has been offered to the sacred Persons of their Majesties.

Folly, it is Madness and Crime, hurling destruction at all the beautiful orders, proportions, and relations of Society. An insensibility to a system so fraught with calamity and crime, and so contagious, must indicate a mortal gangrene of the Mind.

A SERMON, &c.

XXXVII PSALM, 36 37 verses.

“I MYSELF HAVE SEEN THE UNGODLY IN GREAT
“POWER AND FLOURISHING LIKE A GREEN BAY-TREE
“I WENT BY, AND LO HE WAS GONE, I SOUGHT HIM
“BUT HIS PLACE COULD NO WHERE BE FOUND.”

HOW lively! But how awful! is this representation, which pleads to us with all the energy of example. It is the portrait of man fallen through impiety. We look farther, and behold, it is the picture of Nations, we discover the decline of religion followed by the dissolution of States. Yet what avails this sacred record of truth to day? who hearkens to this warning voice, though confirmed by what profane history proclaims from the Creation to this moment—that the civil and religious existence of Nations is inseparable, that the stroke which shocks the one pervades the other: sap Religion and you sap the State.

In

In this age and country, it may perhaps be said, immorality grows up with *civilized luxury* at home, or is introduced by polished depravity from abroad. Be it admitted. Nay, be it further admitted, that were this or any other Nation, even more degraded, and as much endangered by immoral grossness, as it is by corrupt refinement: there is, however, a rampart to check, and a power to repel the incursions of vice. There is, thank God, a system that gives new force to old virtues; it is the pure and simple precepts of Christianity.

But if the disciples of philosophy in those Empires, that have fallen, far surpassed the professors of Christianity, in those which exist, we have indeed reason to be alarmed: it is high time to rise up, to watch and pray to the Great Ruler of events against a similitude of fate. Neither will the God of mercy be deaf to our prayers, nor dull to our exertions. Let us then be ardent, be instant, for the stake is momentous. It is our *civil* and *religious* welfare; our temporal and eternal interests; it is our happiness here and hererafter,

Menaced as these are, let us adopt in pursuit of moral remedies, the found practice in physical complaints; let us follow the disorders to their source, and there combat for the cure.

I shall therefore—**FIRST** trace the present causes of the decline of religion, and strip them of their mask of pretended philosophy to discover their real spirit of Libertinism. **SECONDLY**, I shall point out the resembling traits between the old and this new philosophy. And, **THIRDLY**, I shall hold up to view the effects of these systems upon their respective States: and shall then conclude by an immediate application to ourselves.

FIRST, then, let us view the causes of the decline of religion, in the mock claims of this age to philosophy.—When we cast our eyes upon the philosophers of old, we behold them, through respect for public worship and established faith, playing in the Temples of Paganism the part of devotees. But when we view the pretended philosophers of our time, we discover them, in contempt of established religion, counterfeiting in the midst of Christianity the character of Atheists. I say counterfeiting, because, that there are Libertines, who wish to impose upon and triumph over virtue, cannot alas! be denied; but that there are Atheists is as absurd, as that the Heavens and Creation do not exist.

Man may deceive himself, and wish to be incredulous; because to extinguish religion is to

to give new fire to his passions. But when is he so dazzled by the rays of his philosophy as to pretend to conclude, like the fool in his heart, that there is no God? When does he begin to think of doubting about another existence? When?—Why at the moment that it becomes his interest, that all his hopes and fears closed with this life, and that the Supreme Being, were himself annihilated. But far is infidelity, and its accomplice Libertinism, far from having the least substance, or shadow of reason. They rise upon a threefold basis of corruption,

1st.—A vain spirit of Singularity:

2dly.—A diminutive sentiment of Pride:

3dly.—A principle of Interest, Despair, and Prejudice:

all assuming, and degrading, the name of Philosophy. But let us examine these causes of modern Infidelity.

First, I have said that incredulity is formed upon a spirit of Singularity—And why? in order to have the *ridiculous* advantage not to think as others think, to say what nobody has said, and to contradict that which all the world says: in order to form a religion of fantasy, a divinity according to sense, a Providence quite arbitrary and such as conception may paint it.

This

This vain spirit erects for itself chimerical systems which it establishes or overturns according to the humour that prevails; rejecting to day what it supported yesterday, and through the desire of controlling God never of accord with itself. Such is the incredulous man through the spirit of singularity.

Secondly, what is he when possessed of a sentiment of Pride? contradictory, capricious, and haughty, he will not humble himself to subject *his reason* to the word of God, though in a thousand temporal affairs he confesses he has need to be conducted by the opinions of man; avowing humbly his insufficiency as to what regards the little secrets of nature, and deciding with hardiness when there is question of the sublime mysteries of the Creator.

But, in the Third place, when prompted by a principle of Interest, and driven on by Despair, then it is that the Libertine is alarmed and catches at incredulity for repose. His conscience importunes him, his *pleasures* trouble him, and religion—like an avenging spirit, rises before him in his designs. Its laws frown menacingly upon his crimes, and in the solitary gloom of night, flashing like characters of fire across his troubled sense, they write guilt upon his tortured soul. Then it is, that torn by

remorse, and hurried on by despair, he plunges from horror into infidelity.

In fine, let us view this man incredulous through Prejudice. In every other point he piques himself to be prepossessed upon nothing: and in matters of religion he is prejudiced upon all. Propose to him revelations founded on tradition the most ancient, and the most constant, confirmed by the conviction of miracles, signed with the blood of Martyrs, witnessed by the authority of the most wise, corroborated by the testimony of friends and enemies, and substantiated by the belief of entire Nations, all this makes no impression upon him. Nay propose to him even a single precept of the gospel, a maxim of morality marked by its very purity as with the finger of God himself, he will not admit it without the severest criticism. But propose to him the ravings and vain fantasies of some new Philosopher, who would regulate the world according to his whims, there is what this grand genius, this soaring disciple of modern Philosophy, meditates profoundly; what he maintains obstinately, and to what he would die a Martyr.

If the sons of genius be indeed amongst those men, the brightness of their intelligence is dimmed to us; we see it across the tears of religion

religion. We wish however to pay a tribute even to the claims upon superior intellect: yet here alas! it must be to deplore its instability or submissive credulity. But if these men have not wholly lost the exalted distinctions of mind, and be not chained as it were by the chimeras of madness, we shall invoke their attention.

Upon the points of Atheism and Infidelity, we have hitherto skirmished with them. Let us now meet them on the great question of Christianity, against which is directed their grand attack. Would that the limits of this place did not prescribe limits to our defence! But we challenge forth their strongest charges against christianity. What are they? Do they say that it was established by our Saviour, as the Roman state was by Numa? he pretended that all his institutions were under the directions of the Goddess Egeria, and the people received them. Do they say that it resembles the religion of Mahomet? he formed it for civil purposes, and acquired power. Oh christianity! how different thy pursuits, how divinely pure art thou, formed for heavenly purposes and to renounce power. Let thy enemies but turn to thy gospel, and there blush at their own systems and falsehood, touched, won, and pardoned by thy mild and sublime morality.

Should, however, the Philosophers of to day still labour under the impression, that the gospel is but the visions of enthusiasm, or fables of imposture, let us endeavour to undeceive them. Had not the Messiah means to fascinate his contemporaries into implicit confidence of his mission, and an abject credulity of his power ? But he was far superior to such means. The facts by which he addressed their conviction were of a nature the most august. They were such as far surpassed all the dexterity of contrivance—they were his Resurrection, his Ascension. These are the awful instances of power, that exhibited at once the proofs of omnipotence and the execution of a Deity. Here are no delusions of fancy, no dreams of enthusiastic infatuation, subtleties of artifice, nor frauds of imposition. They were not appeals to the tumultuous warmth of an impassioned imagination, they were objects addressed to the unerring sense, sealed with the evidence of miraculous power. The blind saw, the deaf heard, the dumb spoke, the dead arose, the raging sea was stilled: well then might the enemies of christianity cry out, in the agonies of resentment and apprehensions of despair, this man does many miracles, if we let him alone, all men will believe in him.

What say then his accusers to day ? Let them

them come forth and I shall put before them the operation, the extent, and the objects of his power, I shall entreat then to examine with the most rigid researches of animosity his past life and his future views, and I shall then call on them for an answer; and on this very answer, and the pure simplicity of his doctrine, shall I rest the refutation of their charge. But I fear alas! it is vain to attack the incredulous libertine thus; for what is his resource when proofs press hard upon him? To escape defeat he flies to a spirit of raillery. Solid reason cannot fasten to conviction those shifting spirits in all their malignant turns. He answers by a word of wit, or piquant satire, by a tale of happy invention, or a lively fancy flashing from his imagination, all the solid truths addressed to his conviction.

Hearken to the depraved artifice of these men, when they assert that all religion to day is appearance, and that corruption is universal. Good God! if this be true, we should deplore and correct it; but whether true or false, does this frightful opinion of the human race contain their justification? Can the depravity of one palliate the guilt of another, or quiet the Scorpion stings in their breast? Oh let us in compassion to them snatch them from error; let us strip it of its delusions, and its hideous form

form shall make them turn aghast. Their conscience shall alarm them even by its whispers, when they contemplate the effects of their own system.

Let them, but for one moment, consider incredulity in the Supreme Being as universal. Let them consider but a single State, where there was neither Sovereign Power nor Ruler, and what must be its condition? In full impunity every man would be master to undertake for his interest whatever he preferred. But as the interests of one person rarely accord with the interests of another, what must ensue from hence? Wars perpetual, dissentions eternal, robbery universal. Every man must have his arms always in his hands for the defence of his property and his life: private quarrels would be revenged by murder, confusion must become general, and the overthrow total. I draw the picture but of a single State, whereas this impious man would extend it, and furnish the Universe as the original when he combats the existence of a God. Are not these effects sufficient then to rouse us against the cause? the sham Philosophy of the day. Should they not attach us with tenfold force to the system of Christianity? If once the altar be undermined, the Throne and the Nation must be swallowed in the abyss: "and their place be no where found."

found." Who is there then that feels a spark of love for God and his country, that will not reject with horror this dangerous and pretended Philosophy. But we shall convince you further, while we shew as our SECOND point, that the very relation between the old and this new Philosophy exists in corruption.

The professors of both agree in the necessity of having some Gods. But then they are Gods of their own fashion. The Romans of old, through insupportable pride, instead of submitting themselves to their Gods, erected themselves into their judges and censors. They deliberated, in full senate, if they should admit such a God into their Capitol or not. Were it agreeable to the judges, he passed to the number of the Gods, but if the juridical probation failed, he was rejected. So that if these pretended Gods did not please those men, those men decided that they were no longer Gods. What then must be the case with these men professing the impious principles of the new Philosophy? will they decide for the God of Christianity or those Gods of the Pagans?

The God of Christianity they have alas rejected! Therefore man has every thing to fear from them; for the God formed by their caprice, is one whom they need not either love or dread: and

and surely he who despises his sacred duties towards the divinity, will not regard his social ones towards man. Such too was the principle of ancient Paganism. Its disciples disarmed all severity by forming their divinity into the God of passions and of crimes: whose commission therefore, instead of shame secured honor. Infamy, incest, and every shameful disorder was authorised by divine example. But the God of Christianity is holy and pure by the necessity of his being, and is incapable, through all the artifice and torture of speculation, to be accommodated with the sensuality of passion or inclinations of crime.

Hence it is that the Libertine knowing him to be such, and despairing of being able to change him, disavows him for his God. And if he does not give into the idolatrous errors of Paganism, he abandons himself to irreligion, erasing from his mind every idea of the divinity, under the pretence, forsooth, of Philosophy. But whether he be Atheist, or whether he be idolatrous, he is indeed to be lamented;-- and that he is to be *feared* also, I shall further prove, which leads me to my THIRD point.

When we consider the effects of Christianity and Philosophy upon States, the superiority of Christianity beams forth like the Sun in pure and

and transcendent lustre above a dusky cloud. This pre-eminence is visible in two indisputable remarks upon these different systems. The first is, that those philosophers were unable to support either themselves, or the states which protected them. Nor can this seem surprising from the picture, which we have placed before you. The next is, that the Christian Religion, on the contrary, by its purity and force triumphed over persecution, prospered without protection, and raised States and Society to an elevation unknown before. To substantiate those truths, it is not necessary to have recourse for proofs to the dark and distant ages: they are furnished by the unequivocal testimony of more modern times. Greece perished, when its Philosophy was at the highest. Rome fell when its doctrines and its schools were most flourishing. And France, that prospered beneath Christianity, decayed as its Philosophy gained ground.

If we examine the elevation of States, of individuals, or if we consider their downfall, we shall find that there is no foundation so solid for the one, no precaution so sure against the other, as the simple principle of virtue. That system therefore, which teaches this principle most fully, must be the best. In respect to man individually this argument cannot be de-

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nied, socially too it must be admitted : for if no Government be bad, when well administered, and no Government be good if ill administered, and if no Government can be well administered where immorality prevails,—consequently—secure the moral and you secure the civil happiness of Nations. But then what system is the best to secure the moral happiness of men? It is that which teaches the simple principle of virtue most purely and most fully. And that system is proved by its effects, to be Christianity: which as far transcends philosophy as Heaven doth Earth. Where can civil Legislation derive principles more sublime? Or whence can religion draw precepts more pure? These States, and those religions, that have not known, or that have deviated from this basis of Divine wisdom, have all tottered into annihilation. Whatever is human is perishable, that which is divine is immortal, philosophy is the morality of man, Christianity is the religion of God.

But as to the mock philosophy of modern men what is it? Speculative corruption and daring immorality! It is a traitorous sanction for vice, which seeks the introduction of licentious principles under the dignified cloak of an high sounding name. Lamentable indeed is the case of those, who ought to have been the conductors and instructors of mankind! but who

who, fearing the immoral authors of those doctrines men of letters and libertinism, and who, hoping to conciliate or avert their penetration upon other points, did not dare to oppose, but protected their opinions. What a lesson for us! Hence Christianity fell. Hence the Septre has been shaken from the hands of Royalty: hence powers and possessions have been dissipated: hence the crimes of the Nation are written in the blood of thousands, and upon the tombs of Royal victims. Alas! and are we to have a repetition of those crimes? Are we to set at nought the blessings and the curses of Heaven? Are we to diffuse those doctrines over earth in the blood of millions of fellow creatures, friends, parents, brothers and children? Oh! the soul startles at the thought, and rising with all the energy of virtue, rouses every faculty of man to duty. It prompts the wise and the good to oppose with the power of reason, and all the purity of religion, the vicious precepts of a corrupt philosophy: it warns the superior classes of society, in particular, to instruct the people by the influence of example. The mode to correct them is to correct themselves. The voice of religion calls upon us, the salvation of the State cries aloud, love your God and you love yourselves. Search the records of history from the formation of the first to the downfal of the last State, and what do all the volumes of their united wisdom unfold?

Hear it in the affecting lamentations of past ages, see it in the unparralled horrors of the living time, oh feel it, feel it for yourselves and your surrounding little ones, it is—that, *relaxation in the morals of a Nation, how polished soever by refinement, or aggravated by grossness, must, if not checked, terminate in civil ruin:* “ though flourishing to day, lo! to morrow, and it shall be gone.” Would you then exemplify this? Ah! never may it be viewed in Britain! consider what are all these sublime monuments of Grecian splendor, these piles of Roman grandeur, now mouldering into dust: what are those seats of French magnificence and power, all overturned: they are the melancholy ruins of National depravity, the pictures of fallen manners,

We, thank God! are not however abandoned wholly to despair: if we pass from those melancholy scenes of corruption abroad and turn our view toward home, there is something consolatory for the mind, some prop for hope to rest upon: there is perhaps, if it so pleases the great and All-merciful creator, some security for us, that HE, whom providence was graciously pleased to save of late for his manifold virtues, may tend to save us by the influence of his good example. Instructed by him may the imitations of the great improve the morals of the people, and this Nation shall prove an happy

happy and a lasting Nation, powerful at home, respected abroad. But here how arduous, how melancholy becomes my task—How touch upon the outrage offered to those hopes and those virtues, how afflict your minds with the misdeeds of others—Ah! it saddens all reflection, like a cloud that issues from the bosom of darkness and hangs mourning upon the day. But thank God! it is dissipated. The universal breath of loyalty and glowing love has succeeded to this dark, this traitorous design. And justly too! for well might his Majesty say, he did not deserve this. No Jerusalem! as exclaimed the Prophet, he never forgot thee, neither his God, nor his country. But you, you new philosophers, with your enlarged patriotism, your enlarged religion, you know neither—God and your country are lost in the pretended vastness of your heads, the pretended universality of your hearts. But away with your impious arrogance, when you behold in this Nation, the Majesty of the throne united with the humility of religion! Let your abhorrence of superiority be bowed down, when you view here the independance of a Sovereign with the obedience of a Christian: and blush in conscious guilt, when you behold joined with the privilege of impunity, equity the most upright, probity the most exact. But such are the virtues of true christianity; yours alas! the vices of false philosophy.

Far

Far be it however, from the purity of this place to flatter even Kings: No! when I exalt the Sovereign, I mean to exalt the Subject also. The trump of Fame must awaken censure, were it to sound forth adulation; whereas, when it breathes instruction, and bears abroad truth, it is the organ of wisdom awakening to virtue by examples, such as God himself will praise, and which man, in order to be good, should follow.

It is wise then in us to contemplate him, who, by his laws, rules over distant Nations of the Globe, who, by his power, supports our rights and confounds our enemies, kneeling before the Lord as his superior, faithful to his laws, zealous for his glory, and imploring the Almighty daily, for blessings upon his people. Hear the fatherless and the widows of so many people and Nations put forth, amidst their own calamities, their fervent prayers for him. Remember too, that beloved by his own people, they proved daily their passion for his welfare, when he was endangered by disease; no heart was shut, every bosom was open, and his Majesty's was not insensible to it—the Nation was touched: and neither King nor People were underserving of mutual love. He merits an attachment that he has taught us. But is there aught worthy of man or monarch that he has not learned from his religion and that he

he does not teach by his virtues? As father, husband and friend, is he not tenderness and affection; as subject to a supreme power, is he not all obedience; as sovereign, is he not mild, benevolent and just? as related to this Nation, he is alive to all your interests, watchful over your welfare, and jealous of your glory—oh! proud, as he is, to be born a Briton, Britons may be proud of him—he offers to monarchs a model for public conduct, to men an example of private virtues. But he loves better that we offer up prayers for him to God, than that we address praises of him to man.

ALMIGHTY LORD! it is to thee he attributes all glory, which coming but from thee belongs to thee alone. If he be enlightened in his councils, it is thy Wisdom that inspires them; if he be happy in his undertakings, it is thy Providence which guides them: if he be successful in his battles, it is thy arm which gives victory: it is thy hand O Lord which crowns him in the midst of prosperity, it is thy mercy that shields him in the midst of danger. There rests with us then, All-merciful Protector, nought farther to demand of thee for him, but that which he demands daily for us—Thy Salvation. Thou O Lord, who hast strengthened the throne of this Nation, against so many enemies who have attacked it, strengthen the hearts of his people against so many passions that surround them. They have victories

to

to gain more glorious than those which have been obtained for them, and thou hast crowns to give him more precious than those which Sovereigns wear. How small, O Lord, were that immortality, which ages might seem to promise man, had he not that, which Thou alone canst give him beyond all time. Consecrate then O God ! so many Royal virtues, by as many Christian ones—he is the Protector and Defender of thy faith ; enlarge the fund of religion which thou hast engraven upon his soul, make him holy as thou hast made him great, and above all, teach his people by his good example, that they may be a lasting and an happy Nation, and that he, after having reigned long and securely through thee, may reign eternally with thee.



FINIS.



